



**SHARON BULOVA**  
**CHAIRMAN**

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
**County of Fairfax**  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

12000 GOVERNMENT CENTER PKWY  
SUITE 530  
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22035-0071  
TELEPHONE: 703/324-2321  
FAX: 703/324-3955  
TTY: 711

[chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov)

## **Proposed Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Task Force**

### **Verizon 9-1-1 Network**

### **Review of Failures, Potential for Future Outages, Development of Communications Plan**

#### **Background & Purpose of Task Force**

The Verizon 9-1-1 Network is a statewide and regionwide network that supports emergency response operations. It receives 9-1-1 calls and directs calls to the proper jurisdiction. Verizon's 9-1-1 service in the metropolitan Washington region is subject to both federal and state regulation. At the state level it is regulated by the Virginia State Corporation Commission, the Maryland Public Service Commission, and the District of Columbia Public Service Commission.

Following the severe storm event of June 29, 2012 prolonged power outages throughout the Metropolitan Washington area were accompanied by an unprecedented failure of the 9-1-1 Verizon Emergency Response Network in the Northern Virginia area. At approximately 6 a.m. on Saturday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, Fairfax County's Emergency Operations Center noted that individuals were not able to reach 9-1-1, nor were calls being received. By later that day some service was partially restored, although the system remained compromised, with calls being misdirected by the network, until Tuesday morning, July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Adding to difficulties and confusion was a lack of information and communications from Verizon to affected local governments and to the media.

While this current failure mainly affected Northern Virginia, the Verizon 9-1-1 Network covers other parts of the Commonwealth of Virginia as well as the District of Columbia and Maryland. Similar failures occurred in Montgomery and Prince George's County in 2010 and 2011. These outages and the subsequent lack of communication from Verizon to local officials in Maryland are the subject of an ongoing investigation by Maryland's Public Service Commission. A future failure could just as likely affect other parts of the Metropolitan Washington Region.

A number of issues and questions need to be better understood and addressed in the aftermath of this serious situation. These questions would define the scope of a COG 9-1-1 Verizon Emergency Network Task Force:

1. What was the cause of the failure?
2. What redundancy and/or backup was in place to prevent a prolonged outage of the 9-1-1 Network and why did it too fail?
3. What can be put in place to remedy what is reported by Verizon to have been damage to their main facility (in Arlington) as well as their back-up system?
4. With the increasing use of newer technology (such as fiber optics) what is, or needs to be in place to prevent failure of the 9-1-1 emergency response system?

5. What is happening regarding regulation at the State and Federal level that COG localities can contribute to?
6. What measures can be put in place to improve communications, especially during emergencies, from Verizon with COG jurisdictions, with the public and with the media?

### **Timeline & Schedule**

To be determined by COG – Recommended deadline of January 2013

### **Suggested Participants**

1. John Foust, chair of COG's Emergency Preparedness Committee
2. Elected officials from COG jurisdictions
3. Verizon Representative
4. Emergency management coordinators from COG jurisdictions
5. Directors of 9-1-1 Centers from COG jurisdictions
6. State regulators:
  - a. William Irby, SCC Director, Division of Communications
  - b. Merwin Sands, Director - Telecommunications Division, Maryland Public Service Commission
  - c. Jennifer A.J. Greene, Director – D.C. Office of Unified Communications
7. Federal regulator: representative from FCC
8. Fairfax County CTO Wanda Gibson and COG jurisdiction counterparts
9. Chief public information officers from COG jurisdictions